



# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2015-2019

*Laying the foundation for Vision 2025*



Adopted October 27, 2014

## ***Contents***

<b>2</b>	<b>Mission Statement, Vision 2025 &amp; Core Values</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Key Strategies &amp; Priorities</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Action 1: Medical</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Action 2: Education</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Action 3: Waterway Village</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Action 4: Gulf State Park</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Action 5: Gulf Beach District</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Gulf Shores Elected Officials</b>



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## ***MISSION STATEMENT***

The City of Gulf Shores is committed to meeting and exceeding the needs and expectations of our residents, visitors and businesses. We are committed to preserving our city's family-friendly, small-town, safe atmosphere and beautiful natural surroundings, while providing the infrastructure and amenities necessary to support a sustainable, vibrant economy.

## ***VISION 2025***

In the year 2025, the City of Gulf Shores will be the most desirable small town destination community in the South in which to live, visit, retire and invest. This will be due to its enduring, wholesome, low-key and pleasurable lifestyle amidst its restorative and vibrant natural surroundings and thriving economy.

## ***VISION 2025 – CORE VALUES***

The City intends to prioritize allocation of its resources based on these core values.

- We protect and enhance the quality of life for our residents, visitors and retirees
- We protect and preserve our unique natural resources
- We honor the family centric-and safety-oriented tradition
- We maintain a relaxed, no-hassle environment
- We support a clear culture of Southern hospitality
- We enhance the sense of place
- We embed sustainability into the fabric of the community
- We promote economic prosperity in a business-friendly atmosphere
- We boost competition in the market place unaccepting of the status quo
- We commit to excellence and the highest quality standards

## ***VISION 2025 – KEY STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES***

In order to prioritize actions for implementation, we present the following key strategies.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

- The responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices will preserve Gulf Shores' balance with nature.
- Environmental education should be expanded in our community to promote responsible stewardship of natural resources and steps to live more sustainably.

### **WELL-ORGANIZED INFRASTRUCTURE**

- The design of new roadways, air services and waterways as well as the enhancement of existing transportation routes are essential.
- Architecture of utilities including water, fiber, electricity, sewage and other public services are imperative.

### **ECONOMIC, GEOGRAPHIC AND SEASONAL DIVERSIFICATION**

- Foster a long-term relationship between ecology, technology and economy, promoting the equitable sharing of resources and reducing conflicts.
- Because the tourism-related sector is so dominant, things we do that help or hurt this sector will have a far greater effect on our economy than what happens in other sectors.
- Additionally, becoming less beach-dependent and investing in infrastructure that encourages the long-term growth of other business sectors will help diversify and stabilize the overall economy.

### **SUSTAINABILITY**

- Infrastructures that promote a natural balance, preserve biodiversity and protect our valued natural resources are solutions that benefit the land and community now and for future generations.
- Health and wellness of a community correlate to the health of a community's economy.
- Standards of excellence in service to meet and exceed the needs of the community and its safety must be upheld.

### **PROSPERITY**

- Strategies should take into account impacts across all business sectors and strive to strengthen the relationship between small town and big beach.
- To protect the quality of life for all residents and the high-value experience for our visitors, hospitality, retirement and businesses independent of these sectors must be able to prosper.
- Thoughtful investment in our community will attract more investment.

### **LEADING EDGE HEALTHCARE**

- Enhanced healthcare services contribute to the well-being and safety of the community and contribute to the economy.



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#### **PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION**

- Quality education is a critical necessity for any prosperous community to attract educated professionals as well as feed our economy from within with targeted and nationally-recognized programs and facilities.

#### **COMMUNITY PLANNING**

- New development and revitalization of buildings and infrastructure will enhance sense of place and quality of life.
- Ongoing and consistent enforcement of zoning and building codes and regulations will protect the health, safety and welfare of our residents and businesses.
- Infrastructure and transportation improvements will focus on creating bike-and pedestrian-friendly corridors as well as public green spaces.

## ***MEDICAL - VISION 2025***

We have a responsibility to provide direct access to quality wellness services and emergency care to our citizens and visitors. Encouraging quality public health serves the needs of our citizens and helps to foster retiree and visitor recruitment and retention.

*PROPOSAL:* The city supports the development of a prestigious medical facility invested in people, patient and family-centered care; medical discovery and education. The complex, located within the coastal Alabama region, will be impressive in scope, innovation and medical specialties.

- We must provide prompt access to our medical facilities; the difference between seconds and minutes is critical. The proposed location would provide this access for our community and would promote geographic diversification by redistributing traffic away from Highway 59.
- This state-of-the-art facility and its services would ensure our residents and visitors have access to innovative treatment specific to their needs.
- Studies have shown a direct connection between improving a community's health and improving its economy.
- Access to quality healthcare affects our ability to attract and retain employers, families and retirees. It is important to provide the necessary resources to successfully implement workplace and community wellness programs to help improve productivity and reduce health spending.
- This medical facility would provide an opportunity to create partnerships to strengthen our education ecosystem and diversify our economy by offering residency and other academic programs.

## ***MEDICAL - STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOMES***

By 2020, we anticipate the announcement of a new regional healthcare facility to be / being built to serve the Alabama Gulf Coast. The development of this new facility will be the culmination of an ongoing regional cooperative effort.

By 2020, leading-edge programs will be established for maintaining the independence and quality of life for adults and their families. Additionally, the City will insure the coordination of services for advocating, educating, coordinating and implementing programs and services for older adults.

By 2020, emergency health care facilities will be more accessible and will provide expanded superior level services to residents and visitors.

## ***MEDICAL – STRATEGIC PLAN STRATEGIES***

1. The City will work to develop a regional partnership for the development and support of a new regional healthcare facility to serve the Alabama Gulf Coast.
2. The City will take a lead role in facilitating the programming and development of the new regional healthcare facility.
3. The City will take a proactive role in targeting new economic development opportunities that will help to support and enhance services provided by the new hospital.
4. The City will improve vehicular access points to and from the Baldwin Beach Express in the following ways:
  - a. County Road 8 will be accepted as a City roadway
  - b. An at grade/signalized intersection will be completed at County Road 8
  - c. Improvements along Cotton Creek Drive will be completed
  - d. County Road 4/Cotton Creek Bridge improvements will be completed
  - e. Improvements to Roscoe Road will be completed and the subsequent acceptance as a City roadway will follow
5. The City will promote and encourage the development of additional assisted and independent living facilities in Gulf Shores by:
  - a. Reviewing and analyzing current and future demand for assisted living facilities
  - b. Reviewing appropriate zoning and zoning regulations to encourage development
  - c. Reviewing and analyzing economic development impacts of assisted living facilities
6. The City will take a leading role to encourage the development of local medical workforce training and supporting academic programs at the City's new education campus.
7. The City will continuously monitor trends within the retiree population including:
  - a. Inflow/outflow of retiree population
  - b. Pension income being spent in Gulf Shores from areas outside of the City Limits
8. The City will analyze current and planned senior citizen locations (Oyster Bay Village, The Haven, etc.) to develop improved transportation options to and from healthcare centers.
9. The City will foster the development of a Chamber Business Certification program to encourage local shops and restaurants to become age-friendly by implementing age-friendly hours, discounts and other incentives.
10. The City will conduct an annual Town Hall Meeting to gather input from senior citizens on current challenges and improvements that can be explored.
11. The City will help to develop and implement an education program to encourage the development of Aging in Place housing.
12. The City will advocate for the development and expansion of emergency health care facilities to provide residents and visitors more access to superior level services.



## ***EDUCATION – VISION 2025***

Exposure to advanced levels of education and curriculum supports sustainable economic development by providing our community with a perpetual and attractive workforce.

*PROPOSAL:* The city and its partners will build a first-rate academic campus incorporating a powerful dual-enrollment model proven to promote access to higher education. The campus will feature a leading-edge design incorporating the latest technology into a new high school and a new additional Faulkner State Community College location complete with on campus housing and student life activities. This innovative campus will encourage affiliations with four-year universities to complete the higher education model by offering bachelor's and master's programs.

- This new campus and its location will support geographic diversity and the county school system's efforts to resolve overcrowding and traffic issues with our current school campus.
- This education model presents an opportunity to create nationally-recognized programs in ecology, maritime, culinary, hospitality and college preparatory specialties. These programs will enhance the education of our youth and will develop a skilled workforce to propel our local economy.
- The strategic collaboration between the city, the Baldwin County Board of Education, Faulkner State Community College and four-year institutions will provide our citizens with a direct and affordable path to a four-year degree or vocational career without ever having to leave our community.
- Enhancing our quality of education along with developing partnerships with respected colleges and universities will serve as an attraction for residential retention and relocation.
- The presence of a college or university nearby will add to the cultural offerings of our area and will stimulate education industry investment and economic diversity.
- On-campus student housing can be utilized for seasonal workforce housing.
- Having a superlative education facility located in a vacation destination will support economic development by attracting educational and business conferences to bolster our shoulder season tourism.
- The reputation of providing world-class education will be invaluable for enhancing our community pride and perception.



## ***EDUCATION – STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOMES***

In 2015, the City of Gulf Shores will support a Baldwin County referendum for countywide funding, including a new high school, relocated middle school and expanded elementary school in Gulf Shores.

By 2018, the first phase of the new education campus will open with a new Gulf Shores High School and an additional Faulkner State Community College campus that will offer specialized dual-enrollment and vocational career programs focused on the skilled workforce development needs of the local economy.

Over the next 5 years, the construction of the Alabama Gulf Coast Center for Higher Education will be announced. The Center will be located on the Gulf Shores education campus and will provide the community with a direct and affordable path to bachelor's and master's degree programs.

## ***EDUCATION – STRATEGIC PLAN STRATEGIES***

1. The City will assemble the acreage necessary to support the development of an innovative education campus that will include a new Gulf Shores High School, an additional Faulkner State Community College campus that will offer specialized dual-enrollment and vocational career programs and the Alabama Gulf Coast Center for Higher Education that will offer degree programs from the University of South Alabama, the University of Alabama and other four-year institutions.
2. The City will help to coordinate efforts to provide the infrastructure and funding sources necessary to support the development of the new education campus including:
  - a. County Road 8 acceptance as a City roadway
  - b. An at grade/signalized intersection will be completed at County Road 8
  - c. Multi-party partnership to finance the development of the new education campus
3. The City will facilitate the development and appointment of an educational campus Planning and Development Committee with representatives from Baldwin County Schools, Faulkner State Community College, the University of South Alabama, the University of Alabama and other interested four-year institutions.
4. The City will support a Baldwin County referendum for countywide funding, including the new Gulf Shores High School construction and the conversion of the current high school into a new middle school and the current middle school into an expanded elementary school.
5. The City will seek a public-private partnership for the development of on-campus dormitories to serve as student housing.
6. The City will establish and appoint the Alabama Gulf Coast Educational Advisory Committee to facilitate the development of specialized workforce training programs, the ongoing review of workforce training needs for education campus partners and to encourage continued advanced educational opportunities within the Digital Renaissance initiative and Learning for Life academies.

## ***WATERWAY DISTRICT – VISION 2025***

A vibrant waterway district will create a unique sense of community and place that engages citizens and guests in an enriched experience of the local landscape, economy and culture.

*PROPOSAL:* Waterway Village has already begun to take shape along the Intracoastal Waterway. This walkable waterfront district will connect the north and south sides of the Intracoastal Waterway and the east and west sides of Highway 59.

Its pedestrian-friendly design will feature quaint streets with tree-lined sidewalks, inviting seating areas, decorative lamp posts and a waterfront boardwalk offering a year-round destination for dining, shopping, arts and entertainment. The proposed plan recently received the ALAPA 2014 Outstanding Planning Award.

- Pedestrian-friendly waterway district is already underway.
- The district will connect the north and south sides of The Intracoastal Waterway and east and west sides of 59.
- The waterway district will provide a lively destination and unique “sense of place” where locals and visitors can gather to experience a different side of Gulf Shores. Water taxis, shrimp boats, fresh seafood and produce markets, retail shops, restaurants, art galleries, music and entertainment will create a lively area to enjoy.
- The district will enhance our community’s resiliency and geographic diversification by providing a new economic hub in an area away from the beach that has proven to recover quickly after storms.
- The waterway district will further attract private enterprise investment as it becomes a hotspot for arts, culture and entertainment.
- The area’s pedestrian-friendly design will help to stimulate our local economy by providing residents and visitors easier access to local businesses.
- Form-based zoning will entice investment in the area as it allows for flexibility in land use and development within the district.
- The Gulf Shores Business and Aviation Park’s available sites and buildings and its future expansion provide additional opportunities to diversify our economy with both aviation and non-aviation business recruitment that is complementary to our quality of life and tourism economy.
- Significant marketing efforts are underway targeting aircraft maintenance, overhaul and repair services to add to an already diverse mix of seafood, environmental and service industries located in the park.
- The airport’s proximity to the waterway district, combined with potential future connections to the Baldwin Beach Express, provides new opportunities for economic growth capacity and community-based economic development.
- Saunders Yachtworks, a high-end yacht service company located on the Intracoastal Waterway near the Business and Aviation Park, has proved to be a significant contributor to the area’s non-tourism economy and serves as an example of the potential business opportunities presented along this corridor.

### ***WATERWAY DISTRICT – STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOMES***

By 2015, the Airport Business and Aviation Park k will be designated as an Alabama Advantage Site and will have a refreshed master plan to attract new, targeted economic development that will result in diversified economic growth and additional jobs within the City.

By 2016, the City will facilitate additional public–private development opportunities for the revitalization and continued development of properties within Waterway Village.

Over the next 5 years, the City will work with the Army Corps of Engineers and property owners to facilitate the construction of a boardwalk and bulk head along the Intracoastal Waterway to better control erosion along the banks of the canal and to provide a new linear park for residents and visitors to enjoy.

### ***WATERWAY DISTRICT – STRATEGIC PLAN STRATEGIES***

1. The City will work to strengthen its relationship with Waterway Village business owners and will explore the possibilities of developing a special tax district to support new capital improvements and marketing for the area.
2. The City will continue to encourage public-private partnerships for the adaptive reuse and revitalization of properties within Waterway Village South.
3. The City will provide support for special events and programs to help attract residents and tourists to Waterway Village.
4. The City will encourage development and redevelopment within Waterway Village North by completing streetscape and destination identity signage improvements.
5. The City will explore opportunities to construct a new roadway connecting Waterway East Boulevard and the Business and Aviation Park to Cotton Creek Road to provide new economic development opportunities in the area.
6. The City will evaluate and assist with long term public parking needs to stimulate desired development and redevelopment within the district.
7. The City will identify and recruit targeted industries to create a more diversified and sustainable economy.
8. The City will establish and implement effective economic development strategies to encourage development within the Business and Aviation Park.
9. The City will seek Army Corps of Engineers approval for a linear park that will include a bulkhead and boardwalk along the Intracoastal Waterway. Pending approval, the City will research grants and available financial programs to fund the development, operation and maintenance of the park.
10. The City will support the extension of East 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue to connect with Canal Road to create a quainter and more pedestrian-friendly area surrounding Waterway Village South.

### ***GULF STATE PARK – VISION 2025***

Enhancement of Gulf State Park will foster a synergistic and sustainable relationship between the park's habitats, ecology and economy by promoting the equitable sharing and protecting of resources.

#### ***PROPOSAL:***

1. Proper and sustainable enhancement and protection of state park land will attract outdoor enthusiasts, photographers, academics and conservationists to appreciate our distinct bionetwork. The opportunity to be immersed in our unique surroundings will help to inspire the conservation and preservation of our environment.
2. The city will support projects to provide better access from the Baldwin Beach Express to the beach in an effort to help connect visitors to Gulf State Park.
3. Environmental improvements include an environmental research and education facility for Alabama students, trail development and enhancement in the park, dune restoration along the park's beachfront and the establishment of a coastal ecosystems interpretive center.
  - Improved roadway connections to the beach will resolve major traffic obstacles and is a primary facilitator in our ability to develop economic diversification.
  - Reconstruction of the lodge and conference center stimulates tourism and strengthens opportunities for a year-round, stable coastal economy by supporting local jobs and introducing a new market of conference attending visitors to our area.
  - Enhancements in the Gulf State Park will invite locals and visitors to become ambassadors for the Alabama Gulf Coast.
  - The opportunity to work with Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Futures Society would align the city with a prestigious international initiative in the field of environmental development and preservation, enhancing the city's ecological and educational reputation in the market.
  - Strategies to develop educational opportunities include outdoor classrooms to be utilized by our forthcoming academic campus, as well as students from throughout the nation, public excursions for visitors, coastal training and professional development.

### ***GULF STATE PARK – STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOMES***

Over the next 5 years, the City of Gulf Shores will support and partner with the Gulf State Park to provide environmental improvements within the park including an environmental research and education facility, new trail development and dune restoration, and the establishment of a coastal ecosystems interpretive center.

Over the next 5 years, the City of Gulf Shores will assist and support the Gulf State Park in the reconstruction of the Gulf State Park Lodge and Conference Center.

Over the next 5 years, the City of Gulf Shores will support transportation projects to provide improved access from the Baldwin Beach Express and the city's tourist areas to the Lodge and Conference Center.

### ***GULF STATE PARK – STRATEGIC PLAN STRATEGIES***

1. The City will advocate the development of local environmental programs and initiatives to help support environmental improvement projects within Gulf State Park.
2. The City will support the Governor's goals and efforts to reconstruct the Gulf State Park Lodge and Conference Center.
3. The City will secure a partnership with the Jean – Michel Cousteau Ocean Futures Society to establish world-class environmental education programs within the State Park.
4. The City will continue the development and support the future development of improved, safer bike and pedestrian access into and throughout the State Park.
5. The City will evaluate the feasibility of developing a trolley and other public transit options to provide improved access to and from the State Park.
6. The City will support projects to improve vehicular access to the Lodge and Conference Center including, but not limited to:
  - a. The installation of an adaptive traffic signalization stretching from north Gulf Shores along Highway 59 to Beach Boulevard
  - b. The construction of a new bridge across of the Intracoastal Waterway
  - c. The development of the proposed East Beach Boulevard bypass

### ***GULF BEACH DISTRICT – VISION 2025***

The construction of a walkable, energetic beachfront district will attract tourism, stimulate local business, and encourage business and residential relocation.

#### ***PROPOSAL:***

1. Revitalize our beachfront with the development of a quaint, landscaped boulevard that will reroute tourism traffic further from the coastline.
  2. Design and construct a contemporary beachfront that is pedestrian- and bike-friendly with access to beachfront dining, shopping and entertainment.
  3. Connect the Gulf Beach District to Waterway Village with a pedestrian and bike-friendly route.
- This plan will rejuvenate the face of our community by enriching the experience to live, work, play and connect at the beach.
  - A captivating and engaging beachfront will further instill pride with residents that love to live here and visitors that love to visit here, creating an elevated reputation of the community.
  - The new Gulf Beach District takes maximum advantage of the entire half mile of city-owned beachfront.
  - A pedestrian-friendly beachfront reinforces the community “sense of place,” providing a walkable community that is welcoming, safe and accessible.
  - Storm damage recovery is lessened by rerouting major roadways farther north from the coastline.
  - Walkable communities, including sidewalks and bike paths, are proven to increase property value and contribute to the local economy.
  - The diversion of traffic from the beach along with the development of walkable, pedestrian-friendly corridors and the introduction of beach shuttles anticipates the desires of the population and positions Gulf Shores as a progressive beachfront community.

### ***GULF BEACH DISTRICT – STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOMES***

By 2015, the City of Gulf Shores will consider new and updated zoning regulations that support the desired scale and development for a walkable beachfront.

By 2015, the City of Gulf Shores will introduce a comprehensive recycling program along the beachfront to encourage the protection and conservation of our natural resources.

By 2017, the City of Gulf Shores will complete a feasibility study on the development of a trolley and other public transit options.

Over the next 5 years, the City of Gulf Shores will provide new public facilities and improved access to enhance the numerous public beach areas throughout Gulf Shores.

Over the next 5 years, the City of Gulf Shores will complete new, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle improvements to foster a more walkable tourist destination that provides safe pedestrian access to dining, shopping and entertainment.

### ***GULF BEACH DISTRICT – STRATEGIC PLAN STRATEGIES***

1. The City will design and implement improved pedestrian and bicycle-friendly routes to connect the Gulf Beach District to various areas of the city including, but not limited to:
  - a. Gulf Beach District to the Waterway District
  - b. Gulf Beach District to the Gulf State Park Lodge and Conference Center
  - c. Gulf Beach District to destinations north of the Intracoastal Waterway
2. The City will partner with ALDOT to develop the East Beach Boulevard Bypass to expedite eastbound traffic to the State Park and Orange Beach by routing it around the Gulf Beach District.
3. The City will research the feasibility of the development of a trolley and other public transit options to improve access to and from the Gulf State Park Lodge and Conference Center, Waterway Village and other locations throughout the city.
4. The City will design and implement a pedestrian-friendly beachfront that takes advantage of the numerous public beach areas and provides a welcoming, safe and accessible environment.
5. The City will review and implement appropriate zoning revisions to insure all new development or redevelopment is of the appropriate size and scale to enhance its established Small Town, Big Beach brand.
6. The City will develop and implement a comprehensive recycling program along the beachfront by offering enhanced services including, but not limited to:
  - a. Providing convenient trash and recycling receptacles on the beach throughout the high-density condo and public beach areas.
  - b. Developing a centralized recycling center to provide citizens with 24/7 access to recycling resources.
  - c. Encouraging community partnerships to initiate a grassroots campaign to educate locals and visitors on the importance of recycling and conservation of natural resources.



## ***Gulf Shores Elected Officials***

- Robert Craft, Mayor
- Carolyn Doughty, Mayor Pro Tempore - Place 2
- Joe Garris, Councilperson - Place 1
- Philip Harris, Councilperson - Place 3
- Jason Dyken, Councilperson - Place 4
- Steve Jones, Councilperson - Place 5

